ADAM SIMON VAN DER WOUME, 1927-2000

BY

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Adam Simon van der Woude, founder of the Journal for the Study of Judaism and its Editor-in-Chief until 1997, died in Groningen on November 19th, 2000, after a very short illness.

Van der Woude was born into a rural family in Oosterlittens and went to the Gymnasium of Leeuwarden where he received a solid classical formation, not only in Greek and Latin but also in biblical Hebrew. In 1947 he went to the University of Groningen where he graduated in Theology in 1953 (major: Old Testament with Th. Vriezen; minors: New Testament and Dogmatics) and in Semitic Languages in 1955 (major: Aramaic with J.H. Hospers; minors: Akkadian and Egyptian). In 1957 he defended and published his doctoral dissertation (under J.H. Hospers) entitled Die messianischen Vorstellungen der Gemeinde von Qumran, a work partially written during his stays in Heidelberg with Kuhn and in Basel with Baumgartner. With this book, which after more than 40 years still remains a fundamental reference work on the topic, van der Woude was directly acknowledged as one of the major Qumran scholars of the time. Soon after, in 1960, at the age of only 33 years, van der Woude was appointed to the chair of Old Testament and Early Jewish Literature in the Theological Faculty of the University of Groningen, a Faculty which would be his home base for the remainder of his academic career until his retirement in 1992.

Van der Woude dedicated equal attention to the two fields which constituted the academic chair to which he had been appointed. He founded the Qumran Institute in 1961 as a means to further the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and to anchor them in an academic context. In the same year he took upon himself the task of editorial secretary of a major editorial project, a Series of Commentaries in Dutch on all the books of the Old Testament, De Prediking van het Oude Testament (POT), a series of which he was to become the General editor.
When the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (KNAW) acquired the rights of publication in 1961 and 1962 of the biggest part of the manuscripts found in Cave 11, van der Woude was entrusted, together with his colleague from Nijmegen van der Ploeg, with the task of opening, study and editing the manuscripts. This task was to occupy him intensively during the following years. With exemplary speed, van der Woude independently published preliminary editions of all the fragmentary texts entrusted to him and together with van der Ploeg and his collaborator at the Qumran Institute, B. Jongeling, edited the longest of the scrolls from Cave 11, the Aramaic Targum of Job, in 1971. This work established van der Woude's renown as a specialist in the Scrolls. It also earned him his first honorary doctorate, granted by the University of Munich in 1972, as well as membership of the KNAW, of which he was later to become President (Letters section). In 1985, the University of St Andrews granted him a second honorary doctorate, crowning his work as an Old Testament scholar, the field in which he concentrated his attention during the seventies.

The bibliography printed in the Festschrift (The Scriptures and the Scrolls [SVT 49], Brill: Leiden, 1992, 228-68) published on the occasion of his 65th birthday already covered 40 pages at the time and has grown even more after his retirement. In this bibliography it is easy to discern the three main lines of van der Woude's interest and commitment:—the Old Testament, with the commentaries on Micah (1976), Jonah and Nahum (1978), Habakkuk and Zephaniah (1978) Haggai and Malachi (1982) and Zechariah (1984) in the Series POT;—the Dead Sea Scrolls, with his preliminary editions of the materials of Cave 11 culminating in the publication of DJD XXIII in 1998, the complete translation of the scrolls into Dutch in two volumes 1994 and 1995, and many detailed studies;—the history and literature of Early Judaism. Van der Woude's publications in this third section are less numerous than in the other two. Although he did publish two very long contributions on the history of Israel in the Bijbels Handboek (a four volume work he edited both in Dutch and in English) and took care of the edition and translation of the five Syriac Psalms in the Series Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit (Bd IV:1, Gütersloh, 1974), his most important and permanent contribution to this third field was the foundation in 1970 of the JSJ, the first academic journal dedicated to the study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period.

While Van der Woude was able to put together an impressive Advisory Board for JSJ, he alone carried the burden of work for a